

Claim Commission #HJ94  
Lavonne Womack  
March 20, 2009

Good afternoon Madam Chair /Mr. Chair and member of the committee. My name is Lavonne Womack of 28 Wallace Street, New Britain, CT. My problem began back in 2001, but previously in 1999, as a homeowner making less than 80% of the area median income for a family of four, I was eligible for, and received, a grant of \$22,500 for lead paint abatement for my house. In New Britain the program was carried out under the direction of the City of New Britain Department of Public Health. My husband was laid off from the Hartford Insurance in that same year, which made us become eligible without his salary.

In 2001, I was in need of funds to pay for an unexpected expense and to make medically required property improvement for my son who is diagnosed as autistic and has a learning disability. The mortgage company required a subordination of the Notice of Lien that the program had place on my property with my permission.

I contacted John Logan, the person who took my application and had explained the New Britain Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Program to me. He informed me the City of New Britain and DECD had previously subordinated the notice of lien requested by another homeowner in the program. I was shocked when I was told by the local DECD representative that DECD would subordinate only if the City would, and that the then Mayor of New Britain refused my request.

I spoke to several people at the City of New Britain and was advised that they refused my subordination because our family income was now, two years later, above the 80% median income for the lead abatement program. I cannot believe that the City of New Britain and the state DECD would want me to remain at the 80% median income for ten years. Mr. Logan assured me there was nothing in the agreement to restrict my family earning power for the next ten years, the HUD required period for the Notice of Lien. He also said the City's position was draconian. I was not trying to move or do anything illegal. I was just trying to provide a safe and secure home for my autistic son and pay a few bills that were behind, due to my husband being laid off. I then paid the price by delaying my plans for my family's future by paying the balance of the grant off, getting the Notice of Lien released and closing on my new loan from the mortgage company.

Mr. Logan told me I was entitled to the subordination and he suggested I should engage an attorney. My attorney told me we couldn't sue the state without their permission and it was the City that was the problem. Prior to the filing of the lawsuit, I asked for help from my local alderman Michael Trueworthy, Congresswoman Nancy Johnson, U.S. Senator Tim O'Neill and Christopher Dodd, but to no avail.

Finally, in 2005 with the strong urging of Judge Robinson, the City of New Britain agreed to return my \$7,000 rather than go to trial. I then requested, for the third time, that the State DECD return my \$11,170.00 to me.

I asked state DECD Deputy Commissioner Angelo to look into returning my \$11,241.00, but he refused because he stated that the State of Connecticut was not a party either to the grant or the lien agreement with me, yet the Notice of Lien clearly states that the lien is in favor of DECD in the amount of \$14,053.00.

I am at the end of my rope. That is why I am sitting here before you today requesting your help. I have paid over \$11,000 in attorney fees plus sacrificed several plans for my family, especially my autistic son who is still in need of services. Judge Robinson has ruled in my favor. Why can't the State of Connecticut do the right thing and return my money and reimburse me for my legal bills, copies of which are attached to my testimony?

Thank you,

Lavonne Womack